

**Minutes
Environment Scrutiny Panel**

**17 October 2006
5.30 p.m.
Town Hall**

Present: Councillors Wolstenholme (in the Chair), Carr, Colledge, Kinghorn, McDonnell, Marsden, Simpson and Turnbull.

Also in Attendance: Councillors Gibbon, Howarth, Kellett, Robinson and Young.

Senior Engineer (Property Services) John Westgarth.

Technical Resources Manager (Property Services) Andrew Young.

Apologies

There were apologies for absence from Councillors Graham, Leake, Pitts and Walton.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 September 2006

The Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record.

Review Report – Biodiversity

A copy of the draft report on Biodiversity had been circulated for Members consideration prior to the report being submitted to the Scrutiny Committee.

It was agreed that the report be submitted to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee subject to an amendment that Biodiversity Areas be called Wildlife Meadows.

Review of Previous Scrutiny Topic, Unauthorised Parking on Council Land Discussion with Representatives from Property Services (Additional Parking Provision)

Andrew Young and John Westgarth were in attendance to update Members on the Provision of Additional Parking.

The Panel were advised that at present, there were 38 proposed schemes identified from the neighbourhood wardens and requests made from individual members.

Funding for these schemes was available through the Members discretionary allowances, a £50,000 budget within the Housing Revenue Account and match funding from Durham County Council.

The Housing Revenue Account budget was in the Housing Business Plan and could only be used in estates where there were Council owned Housing, it could not therefore be used to fund schemes on private or housing association estates.

In order to maximise the use of the funds, the Council were working with Durham County Council to secure match funding for as many of the schemes as possible. The list was being prioritised using the agreed procedure a copy of which had been circulated and Mr. Westgarth would be meeting the County representative to discuss the list and identify areas of common concern.

This was necessary, not only to maximise the Council's budget but also to ensure that schemes met the approval of the Highways Authority. It would also give the Council's prioritisation process some objectivity through the input from the County Council.

A number of members had already used money from their individual allowances to fund parking schemes and if the Panel wished to see a list of these, it could be prepared and made available.

Some of the schemes came to the Council with prior approval from the County Council with match funding already in place.

John Westgarth had a list of proposed sites and was waiting for a reply from the County Council's representative regarding meeting to discuss which schemes they were prepared to match fund and to agree on prioritisation.

The Chairman asked if the £50,000 budget could come from another account so that the scheme was not limited to council housing estates. The Chairman also asked if the budget was spent if not could the money be spent even if on small schemes.

It was agreed that the subject be reviewed again in six months.

The Chairman thanked Andrew Young and John Westgarth for attending the meeting.

Any Other Business

The Chairman advised the Panel that at the next meeting they would be looking at a new scrutiny topic which was the Riverbanks.

The Meeting terminated at 6.00 p.m.



INTERIM REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

SCRUTINY OF UNAUTHORISED PARKING ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND

The Panel was tasked with reviewing the Council's approach to tackling the problem of Unauthorised Parking on Council Owned Land. The topic was scheduled for a "mini-review" in September / October 2006, specifically to look at the procedure for allocations being developed for the provision of additional parking spaces across the District.

1. BACKGROUND

The subject was allocated from the Scrutiny Committee to the Environment Panel, the initial proposal for the topic coming from the Chairman of the Environment Scrutiny Panel. The reason for the suggestion being there was an apparent lack of formal policy or procedure when allocating priority to the provision of additional parking.

2. AIMS

It was hoped that the relevant Officers could report back to the Panel regarding any progress made in setting up a structured methodology for allocating a "weight" to each proposed scheme for additional parking, to ensure that schemes were allocated in a fair and consistent manner, balancing needs of Residents and available funds.

3. ACTIONS

At a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Panel held 17 October 2006, representatives from Property Services were in attendance to update Members regarding progress relating to the allocation of schemes. Whilst 38 individual schemes had been identified, to ensure that there was match funding from Durham County Council in appropriate cases, a meeting with Officers from Durham County Council would take place to discuss the list of schemes further.

Also it was wondered by Members whether the £50,000 budget from the Housing Revenue Account could be transferred to another account so that scheme in "non-Council house" areas could benefit from the funds. If this was not possible, Members still wished the funds to be utilised to ensure the continued allocation of this fund.

4. OUTCOMES

Due to staff sickness, whilst progress had been made some further work was required in this regard. Accordingly, Members felt that it was perhaps unfair to judge the new procedures until further developments had been made.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members questions regarding to the £50,000 budget (outlined above at point 3) be addressed.
2. The Panel agreed that the subject should be reviewed further in six months time.

PLANNING SHEET FOR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

TOPIC FOR SCRUTINY – Riverbanks
Purpose of Review To examine how the City of Durham as a local Authority liaises with other relevant parties in the maintenance of the riverbanks, predominately in the City Centre area, from an environment point of view. i.e. litter, grounds maintenance, biodiversity, environmental health, licensing, regeneration, etc.
Specific issues to be looked at Impact upon Tourism – link to Economic Scrutiny (public consultation?). Links with other departments. Links with outside organisations. Staffing. Resources. Best Value.
Required Outcomes The best practice for the City of Durham in relation to this function, any improvements as felt required.
Possible Risks Finance for this service. Other external parties not willing to participate / get involved. Regeneration leading to extra footfall, leading to more “damage” i.e. litter, destruction of habitat, impact of building on wildlife etc.

KEY TASKS	
<p>Documents/evidence/research</p> <p><i>What?</i></p> <p><i>Why?</i></p> <p>To provide background information regarding the subject for Members</p>	When
<p>Consultation</p> <p><i>Who/what?</i></p> <p>Public – re. state of the riverbanks in relation to the Durham “experience”.</p> <p><i>Why?</i></p>	When
<p>Witnesses</p> <p><i>Who?</i></p> <p>External Organisations</p> <p>Dean & Chapter University of Durham (Colleges or Estates?) Environment Agency (River) Local Businesses (restaurants / Boat Hire / P.B. Cruiser) Relevant Environmental Groups County Council ???</p> <p>City of Durham Officers –</p> <p>Cultural Services – re. initiatives that maybe ongoing Tourism Staff re. public perception of riverbanks Regeneration Officers, impact, positives i.e. fresh injection of capital, new facilities, impact of such facilities ????</p> <p>Licensing, re. boat hire / P.B. Cruiser and their impact ????</p> <p>Environment Services Manager, Tom Punton Environmental Protection Manager, Michael Yeadon</p> <p><i>Why?</i></p> <p>These are the relevant stakeholders and technical Officers required to give Members information relating to the Riverbanks in Durham.</p>	When
<p>Project start date: November 2006</p>	<p>Draft report deadline: Project completion date:</p>